

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

291112Z Aug 05

UNCLAS RANGOON 000996

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: GOB PRESS CONFERENCE "CLARIFIES" OLD NEWS

REF: A. RANGOON 989

[1](#)B. RANGOON 979

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: The SPDC Information Committee, in an August 28 "press conference" held in Rangoon, declared four opposition groups "unlawful associations" and again accused "destabilizing Western countries" of being behind recent security threats to Burma. In response to a press query, a GOB official dismissed rumors that Burma's de facto leader, Senior General Than Shwe had fallen ill and said he is well and hard at work, blaming the BBC for intentionally broadcasting "fabricated rumors" designed to destabilize the SPDC. The GOB also urged the ILO to mend its ways. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. The GOB held its sixth "press conference" of 2005 on August 28. Present were the Minister of Information, Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan; Minister of Home Affairs, Major General Maung Oo; and representatives of other ministries, including the Myanmar Police Force. Officials openly blamed the BBC for intentionally broadcasting "fabricated rumors" about separatist movements in Shan State and the health of Senior General Than Shwe in order to destabilize the SPDC. The officials reported that Than Shwe is well and is hard at work at the War Office, although he has not made any public appearances or statements since August 20.

[1](#)3. The GOB rehashed old news by again raising the names of various groups and individuals they believe were behind May 7 bombings in Rangoon and the April bombing in Mandalay. They announced the recent arrests of several alleged conspirators whom they accuse of having contacts with "external destructive elements." The Minister of Home Affairs also announced the official designation of four opposition groups as "unlawful associations." These groups are: the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) under "renegade" Sein Win (a cousin of ASSK); the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) under "terrorist" Maung Maung; the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF); and the Shan State Army - South (SSA-S) under Colonel Yawd Seuk.

[1](#)4. The GOB again blamed "Western nations" for financially supporting opponents of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) with the intent to destabilize the regime. In response to a question about the International Labor Organization (ILO), an official stressed that the ILO had been making trouble for Burma and that government organized associations (GONGOs) were correct in recently condemning the ILO.

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT: This "press conference" brought only old news and no new details to light, despite recent media attention to the rumor mill. The SPDC's convoluted efforts to try to pin blame on the May 7 bombings in Rangoon give the impression that the GOB still has no clue who was behind them. Publicly naming four associations "unlawful" is also nothing new, since several people have already been sentenced to life in prison for associating with them. The fact they have officially become illegal, however, may indicate that the regime intends to crack down even harder on anybody who has ever had dealings with them. As for Than Shwe, although the official party line on his health may be unchanged, his absence from the media will continue to feed the rumor mill. END COMMENT.
Stoltz